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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PHUM](#) [SNAR](#) [PTER](#) [PE](#)

SUBJECT: LEFTIST GROUPS STIR ANTI-U.S. SENTIMENT IN AYACUCHO

REF: A. LIMA 1153

[B](#). LIMA 1191

Classified By: CDA James D. Nealon. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Poloff met with local government and civic leaders during a June 23-24 visit to Peru's southern region of Ayacucho. Those leaders described the region's population generally as spirited and rebellious types who were suspicious of outside influence. As such, the region remains fertile ground for the activities of a variety of leftist groups. Spirited rebellion, and cynical manipulation by local political leaders, led thousands of "Ayacuchanos" to participate vigorously, but non-violently, in a July 8-9 strike (refs A and B) aimed in part at the presence of U.S. troops in the area. Observers saw that strike as engineered by former leftist presidential candidate Ollanta Humala and executed in Ayacucho's capital city, Huamanga, by the local "Frente de Defensa" (Defense Front). Meanwhile, the regional government was treading carefully in order to maintain order. End Summary.

Ayacuchanos: Suspicious and Rebellious

[1](#)2. (C) Local government and civic leaders, during poloff's June 23-24 visit to Ayacucho's capital city of Huamanga, described the region's population generally as spirited, rebellious, and suspicious of outside influence. One NGO leader who was not a native of the area explained that Ayacuchanos could be effusively caring and hospitable, but at the same time openly, even violently, rebellious. "Every so often, they have to let their feelings out", he said, explaining the perennial popularity in the region of political protests and various annual festivals. Another contact recalled the region's dark history during the Shining Path insurgency of the 1980s and 1990s in explaining Ayacuchanos' ample distrust of outsiders, in particular the military. "So many of them have bad memories of things the military did during those days", he said; "it's easy to see why they don't trust them now".

Fertile Soil for Leftist Groups

[1](#)3. (C) The birthplace of the "Shining Path" (Sendero Luminoso) insurgent group, Ayacucho remained an active arena for leftist political activity. One such group, the Regional Agrarian Front of Ayacucho (FARA), a leftist organization consisting of individual community-based groups, was region-wide in scope, but emerged only from time to time for specific purposes. More precisely, Ayacucho contacts maintained, it was a political tool of Nationalist Party of Peru (PNP) Congresswoman Juana HUANCACHUARI, who used the group for her own and her party's purposes. In the case of the most recent strikes, local contacts said Huancachuari was traveling the countryside outside of Huamanga threatening to

assess monetary penalties against FARA "members" who failed to take part in the planned demonstrations. Chapters of another leftist organization, the communist Patria Roja (Red Fatherland), existed throughout Peru, but were generally less radical than the Frentes de Defensa. In the case of Huamanga, however, Patria Roja typically joined forces with the local Frente de Defensa during strikes. Finally, SUTEA, the Ayacucho arm of the national teachers' union, was perhaps the most radical of all, according to local observers who alleged ties between SUTEA's leader, Robert HUANALAYA, and Sendero remnants in the nearby Apurimac and Ene River Valley (VRAE). Those contacts could not offer specific information on the nature of those ties beyond saying that former Sendero members sometimes took part in demonstrations alongside SUTEA members.

Radicals Stoke Opposition to U.S. Military Exercise

¶4. (C) Leftist leaders in June took advantage of Ayacuchanos' suspicion of outsiders as Huancahuari and others stoked public opposition to the presence of U.S. troops on a temporary deployment to provide humanitarian assistance in the area. Indeed, the primary demand of the July 8 local strike was that the troops leave Ayacucho. Local observers saw that strike as engineered by former PNP presidential candidate Ollanta Humala, primarily via Huancahuari, and executed in Ayacucho's capital city, Huamanga, by the local "Frente de Defensa" (Defense Front - an umbrella group of smaller individual leftist organizations). In Huamanga's case, the local Frente was headed by a local high school teacher named Iver MARAVI, whom two contacts asserted was a former Sendero member and maintained active ties to the

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organization's remnants in the VRAE. Humala, for his part, had been in Huamanga June 20 inciting the population to take part in the July 8 demonstrations. (Note: no contact asserted that Humala maintained contact with Sendero, either directly or via Maravi.) The Humala/PNP-controlled daily newspaper "La Primera" ran specious stories throughout June in its effort to mobilize public opposition to U.S. activities in Ayacucho.

Regional Government Seeks to Maintain the Peace

¶5. (C) Amid these forces, observers saw Ayacucho's regional government as treading carefully in order to maintain public order. The Regional Vice President told poloff during their June 23 meeting that rioters in 2005 looted and burned the regional government's offices. Clearly with that history in mind, he allowed that the government was concerned about what might happen during the planned July demonstrations. As it happened, there were no threats to the regional president's office. There were, however, reports during the July 9 strike that representatives of the local Frente de Defensa and others were pressuring the Regional President to endorse their demand that U.S. troops leave Ayacucho; which, in the end, he refused to do.

One to Watch

¶6. (C) Comment: Ayacucho has long been one of Peru's flash points and will likely continue to be so for years to come. While the most recent wave of discontent has subsided, the region bears continued attention given the variety of leftist groups active there and the population's readiness to follow their leaders into the streets.

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